

Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Next Steps for Spectrum Policy”
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(As Prepared for Delivery)

There's no question that mobile technology is one of the key components of the economy of both today and of the future. Americans have wholeheartedly embraced the role of mobile in their lives—in fact, there are more wireless devices in this country than people – and mobile is even more critical in developing nations for whom mobile is the first national network for connectivity. Time and again, as the country that pioneered spectrum auctions once, and is the process of doing it again, the world looks to the United States to lead spectrum policy and answer the challenge of meeting spectrum demand. We must continue to rise to that challenge.

Demand for connectivity will only continue to grow as the “Internet of Things” becomes a ubiquitous part of our daily lives. People rely on spectrum to stay connected to friends and family, conduct business, engage with government, and access resources for things like healthcare and education.

This committee has long been a leader in freeing up spectrum for commercial and unlicensed use to meet demand and feed the innovation that has been the hallmark of U.S. spectrum policy. In just the past few congresses we have brought forth legislation to authorize a first-of-its-kind broadcast TV incentive auction legislation, formed working groups focused on modernizing federal spectrum, and worked together to ensure that this vital national resource is put the most efficient and effective use.

The most recent example of this committee's spectrum leadership came just a few months ago with the successful auction of 65 MHz of AWS-3 spectrum for more than \$44 billion. This is particularly significant not only because this single auction raised enough to fully fund FirstNet, but perhaps more strangely, because some said that this auction would never happen. The spectrum auctioned was occupied by the U.S. Department of Defense and other federal agencies, but thanks to bipartisan leadership of this committee and cooperation between industry and government, we were able to bring more spectrum to market to meet demand without adversely impacting government operations. This success is a terrific example of what can be achieved when we work together.

This model can hopefully be recreated in other spectrum bands through the Federal Spectrum Incentive Act. Introduced by Mr. Guthrie and Ms. Matsui, as the broadcast incentive auction is doing for broadcasters, this legislation would allow participating government agencies to receive a portion of the proceeds from the auction of spectrum assigned to it. By incentivizing agencies to take a hard look at their modern spectrum needs and consider alternatives, we can free up even more spectrum for commercial or unlicensed use.

In the past, there has been a great deal of focus on so-called “beachfront” spectrum—the spectrum with the best propagation characteristics for commercial mobile use. Some of this will be auctioned off in the upcoming incentive auction of the 600 MHz band currently used for UHF broadcasting. But these types of opportunities are going to be even more scarce in the future and it means we're going to have to start looking outside of the traditionally desirable spectrum bands. There's only so much spectrum out there, so we need to work with what we have and that means expanding use into the “spectrum frontiers.” The FCC began a proceeding last fall to examine the use of frequencies above 24 GHz—to put that in perspective, most commercial use happens below 6 GHz, and most mobile use is below 3 GHz. Development of technologies that can utilize higher frequencies to meet current and future needs could be a real game-changer. I look forward to hearing more about the FCC's work in the space from our witnesses.

So how do we achieve these goals and ensure that America remains a leader in wireless technology, and development and deployment of mobile innovations? It will require a great deal of working together to

leverage industry and engineering know-how, government authority, and agency implementation. To achieve this, both Congress and the FCC must be flexible and forward-looking stewards of our public spectrum asset. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses how the commission is working to ensure a successful incentive auction, as well as their hard work to ensure we can meet spectrum demand in the future.

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